



From left: Dave Gilmour, Roger Waters, Nick Mason and Rick Wright

Pop: Pink Floyd Stages Lavish Show on 'Wall'

By JOHN ROCKWELL

PINK FLOYD'S concert presentation of its album "The Wall," which received the first of five performances at the Nassau Coliseum on Sunday night, was a real old-fashioned, grand-style event in rock history — at a time of retrenchment and miniaturization in which such events are supposed to be passé.

This show will be receiving only 12 performances in this country, seven in Los Angeles earlier this month and these five. All have been sold out ever since they were announced, with desperate pleas for tickets from all over the country. "The Wall" has been the No. 1 album in the country for several weeks.

The reason for the small number of performances is that this is without question the most lavish stage show in the history of rock-and-roll. Cost estimates from the Pink Floyd office seem vague and contradictory, but it's clear that in the short run, at least — not counting intangible gains in prestige that might ripple back into added album sales — the band will lose a lot of money. One figure places the outlay for the myriad special effects at \$1.8 million. And the sheer bulk of the props would make conventional touring impossible.

The show is divided into two parts of roughly one hour each, and is devoted entirely to extended versions of the songs from "The Wall," including one song printed on the album sleeve but not actually performed on the album's two records. The decision to stick singlemindedly to "The Wall" seems a little odd, because Pink Floyd did include some of the special effects from previous tours, principally a big model airplane that sails over the crowd's head and crashes and a gigantic inflatable pig that lumbers out into the arena, glowering over the audience. If there

are visual references to the past, why not musical ones?

But there was so much going on that there were no real causes for complaint. The principal theatrical conceit of the show is a gigantic wall that roadies build, block by cardboard block, throughout the entire first half of the show, until it entirely obscures the stage end of the hall. There are also wonderful animated films by Gerald Scarfe, extraordinary monster puppets illustrating characters from the songs, many smaller vignettes and effects and, finally, the gargantuan destruction of the wall. Almost incidentally it might be added that everything went off without a hitch, and that the sound was spectacular.

After the smoke cleared, however, the question remained as to whether all this served any valuable artistic impulse. There are some who find Pink Floyd's music incidental at best, and naturally the live stage show does tend to distract from whatever is going on aurally. The four members of the band have never courted individual fame. They and their eight ancillary musicians seemed content to act as technicians, toiling in the service of the event. No doubt some of the music was pre-recorded; it would seem impossible for the film cues to have worked so well otherwise. This isn't really very bothersome, but it may worry more humanistically minded souls.

More serious, though, is the actual worth and depth of "The Wall," apart from the spectacle. The various metaphorical uses to which the idea of a "wall" is put seem reasonable enough. But the whole doesn't really cohere in any sort of inexorable, continuing way, partly because the music lacks the dreamy repetition of the best of Pink Floyd. And the final scene, with the band as a sort of neo-hippie bunch of folksingers celebrating old-fashioned virtues amid the smoldering rubble, seems not only banal but also self-denying, given this band's past accomplishments.

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